

# An evolutionary-theosophical view of “The Platonic Return of the soul”

Martin Euser

October, 2024

## Summary

In this note, I will briefly deal with an evolutionary process view of the Platonic concept of the return of the soul to its source. It will become clear that without such a view, the whole concept looks very much like a *regression* to the Source, which makes little or no sense at all.

## Sketch of the problem

Plato, and his NeoPlatonic successors teach the threefold of “abide, proceed, return”.

The human soul is said to descend into matter and become embroiled in it (or contaminated).

Its task, according to Plato, is to use the “eye of the soul”<sup>1</sup> to connect to the spiritual (noetic) realm and find its way back to the Source from which it sprang.

The question immediately arises: why would the soul plunge into matter, only to have to go back all the way to its source? Does this involve a kind of regression to the pure state the soul has been in before? What’s the use of that? It all seems rather pointless and a bit static.

Instead, might it be that the soul incarnates (*develops suitable vehicles* to manifest itself) in our world to explore it, learn some lessons, evolves and *helps refine and transform the matter of our world* and then gradually transcends

<sup>1</sup> See

[https://www.academia.edu/44079008/Visions\\_of\\_the\\_Suprarational\\_A\\_Study\\_of\\_the\\_Concept\\_of\\_Nous\\_in\\_the\\_Works\\_of\\_Plato\\_and\\_St\\_Augustine\\_of\\_Hippo](https://www.academia.edu/44079008/Visions_of_the_Suprarational_A_Study_of_the_Concept_of_Nous_in_the_Works_of_Plato_and_St_Augustine_of_Hippo) Nous is shown to be something very different from what most modern scholars have claimed that it is.

to a higher level?<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, this is the teaching of the esoteric tradition<sup>3</sup> which comprises a vast terrain. Besides that, there is a broad acceptance of the idea of the evolution of life, so, we can solve this conundrum quite easily<sup>4</sup>.

### **Evolution according to the esoteric tradition**

Evolution, as is commonly understood, refers to Darwin's theory, or rather, the modern synthesis. This theory is problematic in several respects. To begin with, consciousness (and mind) are not explained properly by biologists or psychologists. It all remains a big riddle. Emergentism cannot explain these so-called subjective experiences (qualia) nor the jumps to higher organized species in evolution. There are other concerns with this theory<sup>5</sup> as well. Here, I will confine myself to how the esoteric tradition deals with the idea of evolution.

According to my sources<sup>6</sup>, humans have many (potential) faculties/principles that can be developed: besides the already developed physical framework, including the energetic organization<sup>7</sup>, humans have will, desire, intellect, intuition and imagination that can be developed to a much larger extent. This is connected with mental and spiritual evolution. This is briefly discussed in

2 The essential unity of spirit and matter is a core tenet of the wisdom tradition

3 The esoteric tradition is masterfully depicted in the works of Prof. G. de Purucker, as for example in "Fundamentals of the esoteric philosophy". See bibliography for URL.

4 Process philosophers like A.N. Whitehead and C. Hartshorne have tried to deal with static conceptions of God and nature as well

5 See for example <https://evolutionnews.org/2024/05/fossil-friday-three-modern-scientific-challenges-to-the-causal-adequacy-of-darwinian-explanations/>

There are many more problems with the modern synthesis as well, as calculations with probability theory shows.

6 In my ebook on Transcendence, I give references to many of the sources I use.

7 The circulations and operations of the pranas of Hindu philosophy

my book in chapter seven. (see footnote 4).

In this connection, the “eye of the soul”<sup>8</sup> can be seen as a faculty that is associated with intuition and imagination. Its vision can be developed and refined.

So, instead of a regression to the source, the ascent of the soul is associated with and conditioned by the development of the higher (spiritual) faculties of the human being.

**Conclusion:** the ascent of the soul is a **progression**<sup>9</sup> to the source, not a regression. It is associated with *progressive* evolution.

This is all part of the cosmic process, where beings (sparks of the divine) develop physical vehicles (“consciousness descends into matter”) in order to experience the world and gradually develop the mental and spiritual powers via their experience to progress (return) to the source, *on a higher level than before their descent*.<sup>10</sup>

There is a wealth of teachings associated with this cosmic process, which cannot be dealt with in this note. For example, the question of what is matter and what is its place in the ontological hierarchy is relevant here. The theosophical concept of matter and consciousness/spirit is that the two are not fundamentally different from each other. Matter is condensed spirit, and spirit can be seen as rarefied matter. The first is the preferred option. G. De Purucker writes that consciousness, substance [form of energy, M.E.] and life are three aspects of the same “thing”. **Language separates these aspects** as if they were fundamentally separate things, but they are not. The limitations of language thus have led to many philosophical *pseudo-problems*, which are worthy of a separate article. The interested reader is referred to the bibliography below.

8 Roughly speaking, the principle of *buddhi* in Hindu philosophy

9 Ken Wilber explains this **pre/trans fallacy** in his books, e.g. see Integral Psychology.

10 So, this source is not static. Evolution always goes on. Compare Skolimowski’s writings.

## Bibliography

More information on the involutionary-evolutionary dual process can be found in:

G. de Purucker, Fundamentals of the esoteric philosophy

G. de Purucker, The esoteric doctrine

G. de Purucker, Man in evolution

See [TUP Online \(theosociety.org\)](http://theosociety.org)

A study book on some basic tenets of the esoteric tradition:

[The Rediscovery of Transcendence](#), M. Euser